

**Council on Postsecondary Education
Committee on Equal Opportunities
February 20, 2006**

Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarship (KEES)

Members of the Committee on Equal Opportunities met with two representatives from the KEES Policy Workgroup Monday, October 17, 2005, to receive information related to revisions to the current KEES policy. A multi-agency workgroup with staff from the Council on Postsecondary Education, the Kentucky Department of Education, and the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority was established to review the KEES policy.

The committee discussed the interim suggested policy changes identified by the joint KEES Policy Workgroup and offered suggestions for further consideration. The CEO agreed with the following policies suggested workgroup:

- (1) The merit award portion of the program be strengthened.
- (2) The age cap for participation should be removed.
- (3) The KEES program requirements should be heavily and widely communicated to students and parents.

The committee suggested that the workgroup:

- (1) Pursue and support a policy that would identify, simultaneously or prior to KEES policy changes, a single rigorous curriculum by the Kentucky Board of Education that would be implemented in every school district.
- (2) Develop a policy that establishes a grant program to support access for students that would no longer receive KEES supplemental award money if a determination is made to change the ACT cut-off point from a score of 15 to a score of 19.
- (3) Further review and moderate the appearance that KEES furthers an expectation that with unequal input for all schools there is an expectation of equal output (in student intellectual capacity and performance).
- (4) Evaluate a policy position that all KEES money should be allocated to meritorious students based on need.
- (5) Because the original intent of KEES was to encourage students to pursue postsecondary education, the workgroup should describe how the suggested policy changes will provide this encouragement.

(6) Because the policy change for the KEES supplemental award will have the greatest impact on students scoring between 15 and 18 on the ACT and the average ACT score for African Americans is between 16 and 17, the workgroup should ensure that minority students do not bear the brunt of the policy change without an alternative grant program that provides money for access.

The workgroup has continued to discuss the KEES program. However, the Kentucky Department of Education and the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority have determined that it would be appropriate to pursue a statutory change in the 2006 session of the general assembly to raise the minimum score for the supplemental ACT KEES award from 15 to 18 on the ACT or its equivalent on the SAT. The change would be effective immediately affecting students graduating on or after June 30, 2009. Also, the statutory change will seek to change the high school KEES curriculum definition to refer to five "credits" rather than five "courses" to allow efficiencies in tracking courses taken by KEES recipients.

At its February 1-2 meeting, the Kentucky Board of Education adopted a recommendation to raise the state's minimum high school graduation requirements and require students to take mathematics every year of high school, including Algebra I and II and Geometry. Schools will be required to provide students with lab-based or inquiry-based learning experiences in science. The requirements go into effect 2012.

Enacted in 1998 by the Kentucky General Assembly, Senate Bill 21 provides merit-based grants to high school graduates to assist with college expenses at public and independent institutions in Kentucky. The amount and eligibility for the merit-based award is determined exclusively by academic achievement, based upon a student's high school GPA. A companion award, the ACT supplemental award, is based upon the student's college entrance exam score.

The committee reported that it had reservations regarding the proposed changes to the KEES statutes to the Council on Postsecondary Education at its November 2005 meeting. The committee will provide advice regarding the proposed changes to the KEES statutes.